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Message Text

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16
ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 AF-06 EB-07 /083 W
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R 261340Z APR 75
FM AMEMBASSY SANAA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5393
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 0968

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT
SUBJECT: YARG CABINET MEMBER ON INTERNAL SITUATION

REF: SANAA 818, 876

1. SUMMARY: ON APRIL 22 MINSTATE ABDU AHMED SAID DISCUSSED CURRENT INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS EMPHASIZING PRESIDENT AL-HAMDI'S CONTINUED STRONG POSITION BUT WARNING OF POSSIBLE SHOWDOWN BETWEEN HIM AND SHAIKH ABDULLA AL-AHMAR OVER THE NEXT TWO MONTHS. SAID URGED STRONGER US SUPPORT OF AL-HAMDI AS WELL AS US EFFORTS TO PURSUADE SAUDIS TO DO LIKEWISE.

2. DURING LUNCH ON APRIL 22, MINSTATE ABDU AHMED SAID DISCUSSED AT LENGTH CURRENT INTERNAL YEMENI SITUATION, FOCUSING ON RECENT DIFFICULTIES WHICH PRESIDENT COMMAND COUNCIL IBRAHIM AL-HAMDI HAS BEEN HAVING WITH PRESIDENT CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY, SHEIKH ABDULLA AL-AHMAR. (SEE SANAA 876) SAID STATED THAT AT THE PRESENT TIME AL-HAMDI'S POSITION IS STRONG IN COUNTRY BOTH WITHIN ARMED FORCES AND AMONG GENERAL POPULATION. AL-AHMAR HOWEVER, HAS BEEN PLAYING "STUPID GAME" WHOSE OUTCOME IS STILL NOT CLEAR BECAUSE AL-HAMDI HAS BEEN EXERCISING MUCH RESTRAINT IN AVOIDING OPEN CONFRONTATION WITH AL-AHMAR. SAID EMPHASIZED THAT IF AL-AHMAR CONTINUES ON HIS PRESENT PATH, HOWEVER, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT A CONFRONTATION CAN BE AVOIDED. SAID WANTED TO TAKE
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THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ALERT ME OF THIS POSSIBILITY SO THAT I

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MIGHT NOT BE "SURPRISED TO WAKE UP SOME MORNING AND LEARN

THAT CERTAIN MOVES HAVE BEEN TAKEN."

3. SAID EMPHASIZED THAT HE AND HIS MODERATE CENTRIST FRIENDS ARE FULLY BEHIND HAMDI AND THE ARMY BECAUSE THEY SEE NO OTHER DISCIPLINED FORCE IN YEMEN CAPABLE BOTH OF MAINTAINING ORDER AND OF ASSURING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. AT THE SAME TIME GIVEN THE INCREASING RADICALIZATION IN SOMALIA, ETHIOPIA AND ADEN THE PRESENT YARG GOVERNMENT FEELS THREATENED BOTH EXTERNALLY AND INTERNALLY. WITH REGARD TO THE FORMER THREAT, YEMENIS FEEL THEIR ONLY SALVATION IS TO STRENGTHEN THE ARMY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. WITH REGARD TO THE LATTER THREAT, YEMEN MUST SPEED UP ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ORDER TO BLUNT THE APPEAL WHICH THE RADICAL SOCIALIST REGIME IN ADEN MIGHT HAVE AMONG YEMEN'S IMPOVERISHED AND UNEDUCATED POPULATION.

4. SAID UNDER-SCORED THE NEED FOR US SUPPORT OF HAMDI AND THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO CONFRONT BOTH THE EXTERNAL AS WELL AS THE INTERNAL THREATS FACING YEMEN. SAID EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE SAUDIS DO NOT HAVE A DEEP APPRECIATION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN YEMEN AND IN THE LOWER RED SEA REGION AND THEREFORE INSTEAD OF SUPPORTING HAMDI AND THE OTHER MODERATE YEMENI ELEMENTS THEY ARE SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS LIKE AL'QAHMAR WHO "THROUGH STUPIDITY,

CORRUPTION AND REACTION MIGHT WELL CAUSE YEMEN TO BE TURNED INTO ANOTHER VIET NAM." SAID OPINED THAT THE USG HAS

AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY IN YEMEN TO AVOID REPEATING THE MISTAKES OF VIET NAM IF IT SUPPORTS THE YEMENI MODERATES. HE NOTED THAT SUCH SUPPORT WOULD BE IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH THE US AND OF SAUDI ARABIA IN THE LONG RUN. SAID HOPED THAT THE USG COULD PURSUADE THE SAUDIS TO THROW THEIR FULL SUPPORT BEHIND HAMDI AND TO STOP "PLAYING AROUND" WITH REACTIONARY ELEMENTS WHOSE CURRENT SHORT-SIGHTED WHEELING AND DEALING WOULD ONLY BENEFIT THE LEFTIST EXTREMISTS.

5. COMMENT: IT WAS OBVIOUS FROM SAID'S COMMENTS THAT THE MAIN PURPOSE FOR HIS WANTING TO SEE ME WAS TO ALERT ME OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT YEMEN'S INTERNAL PROBLEMS MAY WELL COME TO A CONFIDENTIAL

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HEAD OVER THE NEXT MONTH OR SO, POSSIBLY PRIOR TO THE JUNE 13 EXPIRATION DATE RECENTLY SET FOR THE END OF THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD. SAID APPEARED CONVINCED THAT HAMDI AND HIS GROUP WOULD EMERGE VICTORIOUS BUT IT WAS ALSO OBVIOUS THAT SAID IS HOPING A CONFRONTATION MIGHT BE AVOIDED IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. SAID HAS NO LOVE FOR THE TRIBAL SHAIKHS. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, HE REALIZES THAT SHORT OF A FULL-SCALE REVOLUTION WHICH HE DOES NOT WELCOME, YEMEN'S ONLY HOPE FOR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

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IS THROUGH THE COOPERATION OF THE MODERATE AND CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS IN THE COUNTRY. AT THE SAME TIME, HE IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE IF THE CONSERVATIVE SHAIKHS AND THEIR SAUDI SUPPORTERS ARE NOT ABLE TO SEE THAT THEIR LONG-TERM SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON THEIR COOPERATION WITH THE MODERATES. SAID IS WELL PLUGGED IN AND HIS VIEWS ARE WORTHY OF SERIOUS CONSIDERATION, PARTICULARLY BY OUR SAUDI FRIENDS.
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